

spread and increase in its occurrence has meant that it has become less noteworthy, and I have found it difficult to discover how far it actually has spread since it first arrived in this country, probably from Southern France. As far as I know, the Bar Hill male is the first record for Cambridgeshire, and at present it is the most northerly British record I have come across for this species. I would be pleased to hear of other records of *leautieri*, particularly those from counties away from the south coast. — Dr. M. E. N. MAJERUS, University of Cambridge, Department of Genetics, Downing Street, Cambridge.

SEMI-ARBOREAL HABITS OF SPILOSOMA AND ARCTIA SPECIES.

— I was interested to see B. K. West's note (1984, *Ent. Rec.* 96: 180-181) in which he deplores the vagueness of the published food-plant information for *Spilosoma* species, even in Vol. 9 of *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (1979, ed. J. Heath and A. M. Emmet) which is supposedly a fresh compilation of our communal knowledge. I, too, was disappointed in the staleness of the information on the oviposition and feeding habits of *Spilosoma* and *Arctia* species — but I concluded that "communal" is the operative word, and that if I had information contrary to the last published source it was really up to me to let the author of the relevant section of MBGBI know so that the written record could be improved. This I had failed to do, but West's comments (*op. cit.*) now prompt me to record that, over the years, I have found egg batches, or very densely aggregated early instar larvae, of *Spilosoma* and *Arctia* species on trees as follows: *Spilosoma luteum* (Hufnagel) on *Quercus robur*, *Sorbus aria* (twice), *Prunus spinosa* (thrice), *Crataegus monogyna*, and *Salix atrocinerea*; *Arctia caja* (L.) on *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Salix aurita* (twice), and *Salix atrocinerea* (twice); and *Arctia villica* (L.) on *Salix cinerea*. I have never found eggs of *Spilosoma lubricipeda* (L.), and only once have I found arctiid eggs on low plants (which, however, I have searched very much less): *A. caja* on *Stellaria media*. Bearing in mind the readiness with which these moths oviposit on practically any surface in captivity, the high mobility and seemingly genuine polyphagy of the larvae, and the fact that these species often abound in almost treeless areas, it would be unwise to make too much of these records. However, the strictly arboreal braconid wasp *Apanteles* (*s. lat.*) *lacteicolor* Viereck includes *S. luteum* in a host range comprising young hairy arboreal caterpillars of several families, indicating that the parasite probably has had a fairly regular history of contact with early instar *S. luteum* larvae on trees and bushes, and all things considered it seems that *S. luteum*, *A. caja* and perhaps *A. villica* may oviposit on trees fairly regularly at least. In these cases the young larvae seem to feed on the tree in a highly aggregated way, until eventually they are disturbed enough to fall off — and then, surely where people find them among the herb and shrub layer will to a large

extent depend on what sort of plants and growth forms can be examined or sampled effectively. Methods (West, *op. cit.*) such as shaking climbing plants festooning fences, examining large leaved plants like docks for holes at the convenience of hedge bank height, or even (at least for the gardeners among us) pulling garden weeds, must rank as highly effective sampling techniques. The sources and experiences cited by West (*op. cit.*) and here do, however, suggest that *S. lubricipeda* may be less apt than *S. luteum* to oviposit on trees, given that both species are and were roughly comparable in abundance in the areas under consideration, and further information on this possible difference would be interesting. — M. R. SHAW, Royal Scottish Museum, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF.

COSSUS COSSUS L. (GOAT MOTH) IN S. E. LONDON, 1984. — The occurrence indicated by the title of this note would not, perhaps, be particularly remarkable, were it not that the species has, I understand, suffered a very definite decline in latter years over much of the country which certainly includes the London and south-eastern districts; and further, that I had never either heard of its being found in my own area since the 1920s, or myself seen a trace of it there in any stage. Trees, usually oaks, infested by the larva could from time to time be found in such places as Windsor Great Park, but none in the last decade or two — a state of affairs that seems fairly typical.

I was, therefore, astonished one day last May to come upon a sap-run low down on the trunk of a fair-sized and healthy oak by the roadside at the edge of Blackheath near Greenwich Park, exhaling the strong unmistakable beery odour associated with the larval stage of *Cossus*, and patronized by a small assemblage of sap-loving insects. In point of species, these were all such as might be attracted to flowing sap unconnected with *Cossus* — the lack of really characteristic 'Cossus' beetles being a result of the evidently great rarity of the moth in the area. The most prominent species on that and later occasions was the Nitidulid *Soronia grisea* L., which swarmed in crevices of bark down which sap was flowing and under debris at the base where it had soaked into the soil. Some of the specimens were unusually large for this species, thus more resembling *S. punctatissima* Ill. — a far less common insect. A few of the small Mycetophagid *Litargus connexus* Geof. ran rapidly in the sunshine in and out of cracks of bark, and were difficult to secure in good condition on account of their agility combined with their fragility. Earwigs too (seldom about in bright daylight) paraded excitedly up and down. On a later visit, what had looked like a dried-up flow on the opposite side of the trunk was found to have been reactivated, whilst another, smaller, one had appeared between the other two. By 20th August all three were dry, which could be due to drought restricting the sap, cessation of larval feeding, or both. On